

July 8, 1970

Academician Vladimir D. Timakov,
President
U.S.S.R. Academy of Medical Science
Solyanka 14, Moscow, U.S.S.R.

Dear colleague:

I have been gratified to read in the press of the release of geneticist Zhores A. Medvedev from involuntary confinement in a mental institution. Let me say in all candor that the incident as well as it could be observed in the United States had all of the earmarks of the return of political repression of scientific freedom. I hope that the authorities in your country will not be misled by the rather limited level of public expression by scientists here in reacting to this situation. When we read of events like this the most unpleasant images of authoritarian repression are evoked, images for which there is unfortunately all too substantial a precedent in many countries in the world. I have delayed somewhat in replying to the situation mainly out of perplexity as to whether Medvedev's personal fate would be helped or hindered by such comment. This kind of reticence may however obscure your own correct perception of how such matters are perceived here and this can only lead to further miscalculations and an erosion of the confidence of the world scientific community about the freedom of scientific investigation in the Soviet Union.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/ged

cc Academician Mstislav V. Keldysh, President
U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences
Leninsky Prospekt 14
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

bcc Mark K. Benenson, Chairman
Amnesty International
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Max Delbrück

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